

AMENDMENT TO DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 has been amended to remove reference numeral “65” overcome an objection made by the Examiner.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet FIG. 1

REMARKS

Claims 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 16, and 17 are pending in the present application. Claims 2, 3, 6, 9, and 11-15 have been canceled. New claim 17 has been added. Claims 1, 8, and 17 are independent.

Specification and Claims

The Examiner has requested that any errors which Applicants may become aware in the specification be corrected.

In view of this, minor changes have been made to the specification to place it in better form for U.S. practice.

Further, minor changes have been made to the pending claims, without affecting the scope thereof, to place them in better form for U.S. practice.

Drawings

The drawings have been objected to because they include reference numeral "65" not mentioned in the specification.

In view of this, reference numeral "65" has been removed from Fig. 1 to overcome this objection.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw this objection.

Inventorship

The Examiner alleges that claims 8-10 and 13-15 are directed to an invention not patentably distinct from claims 1-4 of commonly assigned U.S. Patent Application No. 10/550002.

Applicants respectfully submit that the present application and U.S. Patent Application No. 10/550002 were, at the time of the invention of the present application was made, owned by SHARP KABUSHIKI KAISHA. In view of this Applicants believe that a rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based upon U.S. Patent Application No. 10/550002 should be precluded.

Double Patenting

Claims 8-10 and 13-15 have been provisionally rejected on the ground of nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-4 of copending application No. 10/550002.

In view of this, Applicants submit, herewith, a terminal disclaimer disclaiming the terminal part of the statutory term of any patent granted on the instant application which would extend beyond the expiration date of the full statutory term of any patent granted on Application No. 11/550002, filed on April 9, 2004 to overcome this rejection.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

Claim Objections

Claim 6 has been objected to as being of improper dependent form.

Claim 6 has been amended to overcome this objection.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw this objection.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1-16 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, because of some informalities.

The rejected claims have been amended to overcome this rejection.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

Claim Rejections -35 U.S.C. § 102

(a) Claims 1-7 and 16 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Ando et al. (JP 2001-276484). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Unlike common treatment substances for washing, metal ions are present in the form of extremely fine particles in water. In the case of silver ions, however, as time passes, they change into silver compounds and metal silver, which have larger particles than silver ions. Silver compounds and metal silver can thus stay in the fibers of laundry, which silver ions would tend to simply pass through.

Here, the changes of silver ions into silver compounds or metal silver is promoted by light. In a washing machine, its lid is usually kept closed during a washing session. With the structure of common washing machines, however, light is not completely shielded, and thus external light enters, for example, through a gap or the like between the lid and the laundry inlet. Accordingly, it is reasonable to expect silver ions to change into silver compounds or metal silver as time passes.

Thus, with the help of promotion by light as described above, as time passes, silver ions change into silver compounds or metal silver. Accordingly, so long as a sufficient time can be secured, silver can be attached all over laundry so that the silver exerts its antimicrobial effect all over the laundry.

One of the features recited in claim 1 is:

the mild swirl period or still period comes after the first powerful swirl period and the second powerful swirl period comes after the mild swirl period or still period.

In other words, a first powerful swirl period is followed by a mild swirl period or still period, which in turn is followed by a second powerful swirl period.

In that way, it is possible to attach metal ions (for example, silver ions) to laundry during the first powerful swirl period and the mild swirl period, or during the first powerful swirl period and the still period, and let them change into silver compounds and metal silver. Then, during the second powerful swirl period, it is possible to attaché the silver compounds or metal silver even to the part of the fibers of laundry which the silver compounds or metal silver has not yet attached.

Another feature recited in claim 1 is:

a time of the predetermined process is longer when metal ions are added than when no metal ions are added but the treatment substance is added.

In other words, a predetermined process in a washing session is made longer when metal ions are added than when no metal ions are added but a treatment substance of washing is added.

For a sufficient amount of metal ions to be absorbed by laundry, it takes significantly longer than it does for a treatment substance such as a softener to go all over laundry. With the

configuration recited in claim 1, it is possible to attach a sufficient amount of metal ions to laundry to obtain a satisfactory antimicrobial effect, and it is possible to shorten a washing session in a case where only a treatment substance is added and thereby increase the efficiency of house chores.

The foregoing features of the present invention are not disclosed or suggested by Ando.

Claims 4, 5, 7, and 16, dependent on claim 1, are allowable at least for their dependency on claim 1.

Claims 2, 3, and 6 have been canceled.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

(b) Claims 1-15 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Hird (WO 01/71084 A2). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

(Claim 1)

The distinctive features of the present invention have been described in the foregoing.

Hird fails to disclose or suggest the claimed features recited in claim 1.

Claims 4, 5, 7, and 16, dependent on claim 1, are allowable at least for their dependency on claim 1.

(Claim 8)

One of the features recited in claim 8, as amended, is:

the unbalance correcting portion executes rinsing for correcting uneven spreading of laundry in which, while water having the metal ions added thereto is supplied, agitation is performed.

In other words, rinsing for correcting uneven spreading of laundry (balance correction rinsing) is performed while water having metal ions added thereto is supplied.

With this configuration, thanks to the supply of water during correction of unbalance, it is possible to prevent the lessening of the effect of the metal ions added in a final rinsing process.

Hird discloses performing balance correction by rotation of drum portions relative to each other without supply of water on detection of unbalance (see Figs. 3 and 4, claim 1, etc.). Hird also mentions, as prior art, balance correction methods using water (see description in page 2).

However, Hird does not disclose or suggest performing balance correction rinsing while water having metal ions added thereto is supplied as recited in claim 8.

Claim 10, dependent on claim 8, is allowable at least for its dependency on claim 1.

Claims 9 and 11-15 have been canceled.

In view of this, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

Claim Rejections -35 U.S.C. § 103

(a) Claims 1, 2, and 16 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ando in view of Wada (JP 06-269592). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As stated in the foregoing in response to the rejection of claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), Ando does not disclose or suggest the foregoing features recited in claim 1.

The Examiner relies on the Wada reference to show that applying a finishing agent to laundry, in which the time period while applying a finishing agent is longer than a time period in which no finishing agent is applied is known in the art.

Applicants respectfully submit, however, that even assuming that Ando and Wada can be combined, which Applicants do not admit, Ando in view of Wada fails to disclose or suggest the foregoing features recited in claim 1.

Claim 16, dependent on claim 1, is allowable at least for its dependency on claim 1.

Claim 2 has been canceled.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

(b) Claim 3 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ando in view of Fujii et al. (JP3-97497). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 3 has been canceled, thus rendering this rejection moot.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

New Claim

Claim 17 is allowable at least for the following reasons.

One of the features recited in claim 17 is:

the unbalance correcting portion executes rinsing for correcting uneven spreading of laundry in which, while water having no metal ions added thereto is supplied, agitation is performed, and

in addition the informing portion gives an indication and/or notification that water having no metal ions added thereto is being supplied.

In other words, when rinsing for correcting uneven spreading of laundry (balance correction rinsing) is performed while water having no metal ions added thereto is supplied, an indication and/or notification that water having no metal ions added thereto is being supplied is given.

With this configuration, it is possible to inform the user that the effect of the metal ions added in a final rinsing process may be lessened by the supply of water during correction of unbalance.

However, Hird does not disclose or suggest giving an indication that water having no metal ions added thereto is being supplied when balance correction rinsing is performed while water having no metal ions added thereto is supplied as recited in claim 17.

A favorable determination by the Examiner and allowance of this claim is earnestly solicited.

Conclusion

Accordingly, in view of the above amendments and remarks, reconsideration of the rejections and objections, and allowance of the pending claims are earnestly solicited.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Maki Hatsumi Reg. No. 40,417 at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

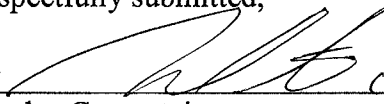
Application No. 10/535,247
Amendment dated January 30, 2009
Reply to Office Action of October 30, 2008

Docket No.: 2936-0241PUS1

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37.C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments